

IN DEFENSE OF MACDONALD

THE FORMER REPRESENTATIVE
WRITES STRONG LETTER TO
THE PRESS.

To the Editor:—

Having been a member of the Legislature of 1907, which made the first adequate appropriation for road building, being familiar with the condition of the roads of Connecticut, and knowing much of the details of Mr. MacDonald's office I have naturally been interested in the discussion and criticism in the press of the commissioner and his work. The great majority of the criticism (if honest) shows an utter lack of knowledge of the subject and some of it is absolutely vicious.

One can readily understand that a commissioner developing as this has with millions to disburse should attract politicians with itching palms and who, for purposes of their own, would start a campaign of criticism to discredit the work of the present incumbent and one can readily conceive of such action on the part of a dishonest contractor who, maybe, for the first time, has been compelled by the commissioner to fulfill specifications; but honest men, who have the welfare of the state at heart, it seems to me should familiarize themselves with the facts before rushing into print to criticize an official or refrain until there are excellent reasons to believe that he is either dishonest or incompetent.

That Mr. MacDonald, as highway commissioner, has been and is not doing absolutely honest work, as he spent the state's money as judiciously as the circumstances and the law would allow, I think can be shown to the satisfaction of any honest, thinking man.

First—There is no breath of suspicion of graft or dishonesty in his department.

Second—He is absolutely in love with his work and devotes his whole time, thought and energy to it.

Third—His commission being a national authority on road building as any man in America, being the oldest road commissioner in point of service in the United States and the author of his works on the subject, his lectures and addresses all over this country, and the demand made on him for advice and counsel in road building are ample proof of this assertion.

Fourth—He has pleaded and fought with the people all over the state for fourteen years to awaken them to action on the subject of good roads and whatever of advancement we have made in this direction is due as much, if not more, to his efforts, than any other man or agency in the state, and this much to his financial disadvantage, past, present and future, though he be given a life tenure of the office.

Fifth—That he possesses the executive ability to dispose of the large fund at his disposal to the best interests of the state at large is practically proven by what he has already done in two short years, when it is known with assistance he was able to command under the law and what co-operation he has been able to secure from the towns.

The history of road building by this state practically began April 1, 1898, and was made possible by the appropriation by the General Assembly in 1907. It was with a slight hope of passage that the law was framed and passed for its connection with the appropriation for the State Army and Navy. It probably would not have gone through. Had it been loaded with provisions for a large clerical force of engineers and deputies, it certainly would have failed of passage, but through the combined effort of Senator Bulkley and James H. MacDonald, the measure became a law with all its limitations. However, the start was made and the commissioner realized the problem of 168 towns demanding immediate roads for their use. He would pay (but 25 per cent of the cost and which demands he was "compelled by law to recognize, with insufficient machinery of office and a dearth of responsible contractors at his command. It is a matter of record that his best efforts were put forth to do a great portion of the work in such time as it could be properly supervised and the state not placed at the mercy of the contractors. But the character of the press and the towns continued and the commissioner was the limit of personal endurance to satisfy it, no relief being in sight and the pressure continued until the rising of the General Assembly in 1908.

Another reason for the commissioner's discouraging such haste was that no provision was incorporated in the 1907 law for the maintenance of roads further than for the commissioner to furnish each town with a certain quantity of stone, which the towns do their own repairing, he having no authority or men to superintend this work. The result of this assistance in material to the towns by the state was that many selectmen ordered it months after they were notified by the commissioner that it was ready and instances are known where this material was used for other roads and the commissioner's roads allowed to go to pieces and he powerless to prevent it. Thus it will be seen it is true, as the statement is that the commissioner has been responsible for the maintenance of state roads for two years and three months is without foundation in fact.

It will be observed by reference to the law of 1907 that the commissioner has no power to build roads without the consent of the towns and has no choice as to the kind of roads they may desire constructed. Macdonald has often been insisted upon by towns selectmen that the state should make appropriation of the value of the road, which they did not pay for, having let them go to rack and ruin in spite of the protests of the commissioner.

Not only have the towns as a rule neglected the state roads but their own are generally bad on account of the lack of ordinary business method employed in maintenance.

The macadam from the West Hartford town line to the borough of Farmington built through the generosity of Alfred Atmore, Pope and Newton Barney of Farmington, and with which the commissioner had nothing to do, was given a coat of tar and new in the spirit of the protest of the commissioner, who advised waiting a year until it had bonded, went to pieces in less than two years when it was repaired at a cost of \$3,500, two thousand of which was contributed by Mr. Pope and is now in bad shape again, through neglect, except for two hundred feet which was treated with tar, on the advice of the commissioner.

It is plainly evident that the condition of the kind or the width of our present roads are not due to the lack of or incompetency of the commissioner.

It is a well-known fact among road builders that a macadam road must be kept perfectly surfaced and reasonably bonded until it has become thoroughly bonded which usually takes about a year and then, even with tar or oil, must have constant attention.

I am of the opinion that now the commissioner may have the machinery and power to maintain state roads that he will give all Connecticut an object lesson of cheap and effective maintenance by employing a man, horse and plow, and at a given stretch of road, which will be obviously cheaper than neglecting it until it has gone to pieces and then build it

all over again, as has been the practice in Connecticut. It seems to me this should satisfactorily answer the criticisms of the commissioner up to three months ago when the 1909 law went into effect, and any claim of what he has or has not done, under this law is simply childish, for road building doesn't begin in the fall, in this climate, and the unusual decision of the commissioner to take plenty of time for his appointments and defer dispensing patronage until his appointments can render some service is commendable.

There may be men in Connecticut who know of roads at any price that have stood the stress of automobile traffic for a number of years, but the best road makers in the world have not yet discovered them and I doubt if the commissioner's critics have. Of this I have no doubt, our commissioner knows every foot of state road in Connecticut and its condition, and that there is nothing new or valuable in road building anywhere that he is not cognizant of; in other words, he is more nearly up to date—and is acknowledged to be by authorities—than any highway commissioner in this country. He now has an opportunity, for the first time, to demonstrate his fitness for handling alone a well equipped department and I have no doubt from what I have observed in him that he will continue to make good. Should, however, the management of this great fund prove too tempting to the politicians and should there in consequence be a division of authority in an important commissioner'ship like this, Connecticut will go something beside republican.

ARTHUR J. BIRDSEYE,
From Hartford Courant.

MORE DANVILLE PROOF.

Jacob Schrahl, 422 South St., Danville, Ill., writes: "For over eighteen months I was a sufferer from kidney and bladder trouble. During the whole time was treated by several doctors and tried several different kidney pills. Seven weeks ago I commenced taking Foley's Kidney Pills, and am feeling better every day and will be glad to tell anyone interested just what Foley's Kidney Pills did for me." B. Brill and Curtis Pharmacy, 1133 agents.

A Wedding Day Reminder.

William James, the famous psychologist of Harvard, said at a dinner in Boston:

"An odor often brings back memories that we had thought buried forever. As we regard some strange landscape it often seems to us that we have been just here before. The oddest, the most momentous associations often seem to attach themselves to the most trifling things."

"Thus at a Thanksgiving dinner that I once attended the hostess said to a sour faced man on my left:

"May I help you to some of the boiled rice, Mr. Smith?"

"Rice? No, thank you—no rice for me," Smith answered vehemently. "It is associated with the worst mistake of my life."

Costs of Office.

On the day after the election the chief magistrate of a certain town in the Midlands who enjoys the reputation of being rather "near" in money matters was asked for a subscription to the local football club.

"I really can't do it," he replied. "Just look at the outlay I've already been put to through accepting office!" And he produced a small ledger inscribed on the cover "Mayor's Expenses." On the top line of the first inside page was the entry, "Dress suit, \$27—Reynolds' Newspaper."

An Exception.

The Philosopher—Tell me what a person reads and I can tell you what he is. The Dyspeptic—Not always. There's my wife, for instance. She's always reading a cookery book. The Philosopher (confidently)—Well? The Dyspeptic—But she's no cook!

A Kurchie Woman.

The Caliban—Gimme your bag, lady, and I'll put it on top of the cab. Mrs. Outenke (as she gets in)—No; that poor horse of yours has got enough to pull; I'll carry it on my lap.—London Tit-Bits.

Do not measure your enjoyment by the amount of money spent in producing it.

BEDRIDDEN WITH ECZEMA SIX WEEKS

Itching, Burning Eruption from
Head to Foot—Doctor Gave Her
Up Entirely—First Application of
Cuticura Brought Relief and Sleep.

CUTICURA REMEDIES
EFFECT PERFECT CURE

"Four years ago I suffered severely with a terrible eczema, being a mass of sores from head to foot, and for six weeks confined to my bed. During that time I suffered continual torture from itching and burning. After being given up by my doctor I was advised to try the Cuticura Remedies. After the first bath with Cuticura Soap and application of Cuticura Ointment I enjoyed the first good sleep during my entire illness. I also used Cuticura Resolvent and the treatment was continued for about three weeks. At the end of that time I was able to leave the house, entirely cured, and have felt no ill effects since. I would advise any person suffering from any form of skin trouble to try the Cuticura Remedies as I know what they did for me. Mrs. Edward Neenning, 203 Main St., Watertown, N. Y., April 11, 1909."

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